

The First 50 Women in Idaho Law

LINDA JEAN COOK

November 1, 1973



Linda Jean Cook was born in Idaho Falls and grew up in a farming family in Ririe, Idaho. After graduating from high school in Ririe, Cook attended Ricks College and obtained a B.S. in sociology and a M.S. in social psychology from BYU. She then accepted a teaching position at a college in Walla Walla, Washington, where some of her classes were in the maximum-security men's prison. Cook was the first woman employee "inside the wall" of the prison in its hundred years of operation.

After two years at the prison, Cook moved to Monterrey, Mexico to teach English and work part-time at the United States Consulate. While living in Mexico, she wanted a career change and decided to go back to school and was accepted at the University of Idaho College of Law beginning in 1970. (At the time, women students were so rare that there was no rest room for women law students.)

There were five women law students at the University of Idaho in the class of 1973, but only four graduated. Two took the Idaho Bar. Cook and Lucinda Weiss (No. 43 on this list) sat for the Idaho Bar and on November 1, 1973, were admitted. The other two women law graduates – Dolores Cooper and JoAnn Henderson (now a member of the faculty at the University of Idaho College of Law) – took and passed the Washington bar that same year.

After graduation, Cook returned to Idaho Falls and worked as both as a prosecutor and in a general law practice which included some criminal defense. In January of 1976, she was appointed to the position of Magistrate Judge for Bonneville County. Since that appointment, Cook has been re-elected every four years. As such, Cook currently ranks fourth in seniority in Idaho's judiciary.

Aside from her duties on the bench, Cook has been professionally involved in civic affairs. In 1993, she was appointed to the Idaho Traffic Safety Commission, which reviews and awards grants for safety projects including bicycle helmets and equipment for rural paramedic units. In 1995, she became a member of the Idaho Supreme Court's Fairness and Equality Committee, which addresses issues of bias such as race and gender in the courts and legal system. In 1995, she was appointed by Governor Phil Batt to the Governor's Task Force for Children at Risk and was subsequently reappointed by Governor Kempthorne. She continues to serve in these positions. Cook previously has been involved in local organizations including H.E.L.P., Inc. a child abuse agency, the Domestic Violence Intervention Center, and on the board of directors of the Bonneville Historical Society.

Cook is interested in history and enjoys traveling to historic sites, including battlefields of the Civil War and the Nez Perce War and following historical trails across America. She also has traveled abroad, especially in England, Scotland, Bosnia and Poland. Cook enjoys reading about places and cultures, and then traveling to these places for a first-hand experience.